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INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 000909

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA MARKINGS)

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CONSULATES NOGALES AND HERMOSILLO'S CONSULATES
NOGALES AND HERMOSILLO'S "MIGRANT TOUR"

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¶1. (SBU) On February 24 and 25, Hermosillo and Nogales conoffs toured a common staging area in northern Sonora, following the well-worn route that &polleros,8 or migrant smugglers, use to move people from southern Mexico through the desert into the United States. Conoffs spoke with those who provide information and services to border-crossers while visiting shelters, flophouses and a returning migrant processing center at the Mariposa Point of Entry (POE), as well as one for minors in Nogales, Sonora. Border Patrol (USBP) in Nogales led a night run, showing first-hand how agents locate and apprehend fence-jumpers.

Altar and Sasabe

¶2. (SBU) The only industry to speak of in Altar is illegal migration. The town's square is surrounded with kiosks selling backpacks and clothing -- black and desert camouflage the only colors. For its size, Altar has an impressive number of low-end restaurants which offer a mixture of southern Mexican and Central American cuisine, reflecting the make-up of Altar's temporary residents.

¶3. (SBU) Altar's flophouses are overcrowded with as many as 18 beds in a 12,x15, room. Nightly rates for a wooden plank that serves as a &bed8 start at 30 pesos (\$2.18), with guests given the option to pay extra for mattresses, blankets, and pillows. Even in the cool 80 degrees of February, unwashed travelers rendered the rooms warm and fetid. Security in the temporary lodging facilities is a concern and several people mentioned the need to keep track of their valuables and apparel) most notably shoes) at all times.

¶4. (SBU) Conditions were better at a no-charge Catholic-run shelter which provides food, clothing and lodging, but is reserved for those turned around at the border. Many of its residents were in poor condition following their attempted trips through the Sonoran Desert and had few reserves, physical or financial, with which to survive. The shelter also housed a "make shift" training center to teach migrants how to identify desert vegetation that could aid (or hinder) their journey and how to locate sources of water set up by American NGOs north of the border.

15. (SBU) Once ready to depart Altar, migrants board one of the fleet of vans in the town center arranged by their "pollero" to begin the drive north to the desert just outside Sasabe. Polleros curiously sell only round-trip tickets for the Altar-Sasabe one-way journey at the cost of USD 50

16. (SBU) New fencing stretches out a total of seven miles at the Sasabe port of entry. Migrants have to make their way either east or west from the tiny village, usually on foot, to a point where they can cross the border unseen. At that point, most migrants have only begun the most difficult part of their journey, however, as they have yet to cross 100 miles to the nearest population center north of the border.

Night Run with Border Patrol in Nogales

17. (SBU) Border Patrol agents in Nogales have put to use significant additional resources, such as new vehicles, armor, and weapons, new bollard, fencing and National Guard technical support to greatly increase their ability to detect and apprehend illegal crossers at the border. Transported by fully-loaded Chevy Suburbans, conoffs came face-to-face with three illegal entrants apprehended by BP bike patrols on the patio of a private home. Minutes later, BP reported another apprehension: one woman limping from a twisted ankle and lacerated shin suffered during her jump over the border fence; the agent had a man in the back of a BP vehicle; and, another woman was quickly identified as the third jumper., Initially, she presented her Nevada driver's license and said she was an LPR that just "happened to be in the area." However, she soon thereafter confessed that she had been in the United States illegally before and had just returned from a visit with her family in Mexico.

18. (SBU) On the outskirts of Nogales dark, rolling hills were

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visible to conoffs with the aid of BP,s night vision goggles, and the tour ended with a visit to the Nogales BP Station evidence room. The BP hosts said many individuals would be caught three or four times before finally heading back to their places of origin, explaining that the polleros often provided their "clients" with multiple crossing attempts included in their fee. According to the Border patrol, it was not a lack of determination, the dangers of crossing dessert, or the efforts of BP that ended an immigrant's attempts to cross the border, but rather the lack of funds to pay for another try.

Mariposa Migrant Center Visit

19. (SBU) The morning of February 25, the Hermosillo contingent and one officer from Nogales were scheduled for a "quick tour" of a center at the Mariposa POE, which provides food, clothing, and medical attention to repatriated migrants. The visit unexpectedly turned into a media event with over 100 U.S. and Mexican volunteers, NGOs and journalists in attendance. One NGO, "No More Deaths," presented a report for Secretary Clinton criticizing U.S. migration policy in general and the Border Patrol's treatment of migrants more specifically. Highlighting alternatives to illegal entry, Hermosillo CG Breidenstine briefed the group on ways in which Mexicans could work legally in the United States, outlining the H2A and B visa program. While one NGO volunteer called the comments naive, as they did not address the policy issue, most participants welcomed more information about the H visa, as they had never before heard of the program.

Nogales DIF Center for Repatriated Minors

110. (SBU) Conoffs visited the Nogales-based new, 80-bed, secure DIF center for an intimate look at the processing of unaccompanied minors repatriated via the Nogales POE. DIF reported that it was working closely with U.S. Border Patrol

to ensure that the unaccompanied minors, repatriation took place during the day to facilitate check-in at the shelter. As a matter of course, BP turns the minors over to the Mexican Consulate in Nogales, Arizona, which coordinates with DIF to pick them up, create a file for each child and photograph them. DIF then uploads the photos onto a website (<http://www.camino-a-casa.org/index2.html>) under &Menores Albergados8 to facilitate reuniting the children with their families.

Conclusions

¶11. (SBU) Conditions for migrants are stark, and the ones in Altar are the poorest of the poor. These trips prove to be expensive, uncomfortable, unhygienic, extremely dangerous, and sometimes even fatal. It is hard to comprehend why so many people continue to throw their fate into the hands of the polleros in hope that they will make it across the Sonoran desert and into the United States alive. Surprisingly, not one of the migrants, nor any of the NGO volunteers we met, had ever heard about the H2A or H2B worker visas. Clearly, more needs to be done to reach out and educate both U.S. companies and the potential Mexican laborers on both the H2A and H2B visa programs.

Next Steps

¶12. (SBU) ConGen Hermosillo has assigned an officer to lead the outreach effort in its district, starting with the Hermosillo airport, through which many Altar-bound migrants pass, and a local shelter, where stowaways on the Nogales-bound train from southern Mexico stop for a free meal, bed and medical attention. A plan is also in place to look at ways to educate those who provide services to returning migrants so that they can encourage the migrants to consider legal alternatives. Furthermore, ConGen Hermosillo is working on a PowerPoint presentation to brief U.S. companies on the petitioning process for the H2A, H2B and other worker visas. Visit Mexico City's Classified Web Site at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/mexicocity> and the North American

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